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PASSION FOR SOUND

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January 2014

Vinyl revolution

Avid's Ingenium turntable brings new life to your record collection

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Ingenious

Avid's latest turntable moves away from its traditional design philosophy, **Ed Selley** finds out if the house sound is there

When a manufacturer hits on a design philosophy that works it shouldn't be too surprising to find that it will use the same basic pattern for as many products as it can. However, in the case of Avid, this methodology is taken one stage further. The company's extensive range of turntables has all been designed 'top down.' The flagship Acutus turntable was developed first and every other turntable since is effectively as much of the Acutus as it is possible to retain at the new lower price point.

This has proved effective and means that Avid turntables have a strong family resemblance and a degree of

'house sound.' If you like what the Acutus does, the Diva – up until very recently the baby of the Avid range – will deliver much of the same characteristics at a more terrestrial level. The catch, or course, is that the Diva is effectively the lowest price that a turntable built on the principles of the Acutus can be produced. In the great scheme of things, the Diva is not hugely expensive, but it meant that Avid was missing out on the sub-£1,000 turntable market, until now that is...

Enter the Ingenium – the first Avid turntable to deviate from the tried and trusted Acutus pattern. The philosophies that mean that the

Acutus looks and sounds the way that it does have not been abandoned altogether, though.

The design is intended to dissipate energy away from the playing surface via the bearing and nothing on the Ingenium is there for decoration, but the layout of the turntable is different to any other Avid that's we've seen before. The chassis of the Ingenium takes the form of a two-piece cruciform with the longer section housing the bearing and tonearm mount and the shorter crossbeam adding stability. The motor is derived from the Diva and sits in free space behind the main chassis member.

The most visually distinctive aspect of the Ingenium's design is the bearing. This is set forward from the centre of the chassis, which means that you can see the entire assembly rotate if you are seated in front of the turntable when it plays. It also means that the spine of the chassis retains more of its structural strength as it is complete across the rear of the unit.

There are some other rather neat touches too. The cork-topped platter used on other Avid turntables is retained and the feet add some useful

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Avid Ingenium

ORIGIN
UK

TYPE
Turntable

WEIGHT
5.8kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
390 x 305 x 130mm

FEATURES

- Choice of arm mounts for 9in and 12in tonearms
- 33/45 RPM speeds available
- Supplied clamp
- Inverted stainless steel bearing

DISTRIBUTOR
Avid HiFi

TELEPHONE
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avidhifi.co.uk



isolation. The excellent Avid clamp is also an option.

As the main chassis member holds the bearing and the arm, the Ingenium differs from other Avid models in that you need to decide what arm mounting you want when you order it – all of the usual suspects are catered for and the review sample is fitted for and supplied with an SME cutout and arm (£1,015). This additionally has two knock-on effects that give the Avid a bit of clear space to rivals. The first is that the chassis can be ordered in a longer length allowing for the Ingenium to mount a 12in arm, which is something of an unusual option at this price. The second is that the chassis member can be extended in both directions and the Ingenium ordered to mount two arms, which is still fairly unusual at any price.

The Ingenium is free of adornments, but the finish is of an extremely high standard throughout. Everything feels extremely solid and very logically thought through. The skeletal design makes working on the deck very simple indeed and setup is extremely easy to carry out. There are a few

minor detractors in comparison to some competitors at this price. The Ingenium has no cover as standard, although Avid produces a variety of options for an additional fee.

The other quirk is that the motor on/off switch is on the power cord and the chances are this will be dangling behind your stand or rack, which can make it difficult to reach. Speed change is done by moving the belt to a different pulley – this is not unusual on turntables that compete with the Ingenium, but it does require the platter to be removed in order to make it possible.

The motor itself is about the only vaguely complex part of the entire setup process on the Avid. It needs to be placed far enough from the chassis to allow for good belt tension or you can experience slight pitch instability on sustained notes. Provided this is done, the Ingenium is very speed stable indeed.

The simple act of supplying the Ingenium for review with a tonearm that costs more than the turntable does should be seen as a sign that the company has considerable faith in its new baby. If the SME M2-9 is a bit rich for your blood, you can order the Ingenium supplied with a Pro-Ject Carbon arm for £1,260 and some Rega arms will drop the price even further. If you can stretch to the SME, though, there is much to be said for this partnership.

Sound quality

With the winner of the recent cartridge group test (*HFC* September 2013), the Nagaoka MP150 attached

– something the SME makes very simple – and connected to an Avid Ingenium phono stage, the turntable makes a very strong case for itself. In keeping with its bigger brothers, the Ingenium is not an intrinsically romantic sounding turntable. It is completely free of any softness or bloom and it is sufficiently revealing that it will show up the limitations on poor pressings. The rather better news is that with discs of any quality at all, the Avid is capable of a truly exceptional performance.

The most immediately arresting aspect of the presentation is the

There is a wonderful effortlessness to the performance that is very compelling

seamless integration from top to bottom that means you tend to sit back and enjoy the performance rather than spend time analysing particular facets of it.

With the sumptuous soundscape of the Hidden Orchestra's *Archipelago*, the Avid produces a wonderfully full and inviting performance that effortlessly spreads and layers the performers in a tangibly real soundstage. There is an effortlessness to the way that the Ingenium performs that is very compelling.

There is a considerable sense of control to the performance, too. With the faster and more aggressively presented *The Bones Of What You Believe* by Chvrches, the Avid gets on

Avid's Ingenium can be fitted with the Ortofon 2M Blue cartridge for £150

The SME M2-9 will set you back an extra £1,015



Q&A

Conrad Mas
Owner of Avid



ES: By necessity, the Ingenium has a different basic design to other Avid turntables. How did you decide on this form?

CM: Actually to the contrary. Despite the different visual appearance, Ingenium follows the same 'trickle down' product philosophy of our other designs. Sharing the same platter, bearing and separate motor of the Diva II the major difference is the main chassis, which is now fabricated rather than using our unique casting design.

Was there a desire to allow for twin arm and 12in mounts from the outset, or is this simply a by-product of the design?

Designed specifically for the Pro-Ject arm, other arm and twin arm options have been requested, but unlike the fixed parameters of our cast chassis the fabricated design of the Ingenium lends itself to these variants. You must always remember, however, arms are not then interchangeable, each Ingenium is specific for the arm its designed to accommodate only.

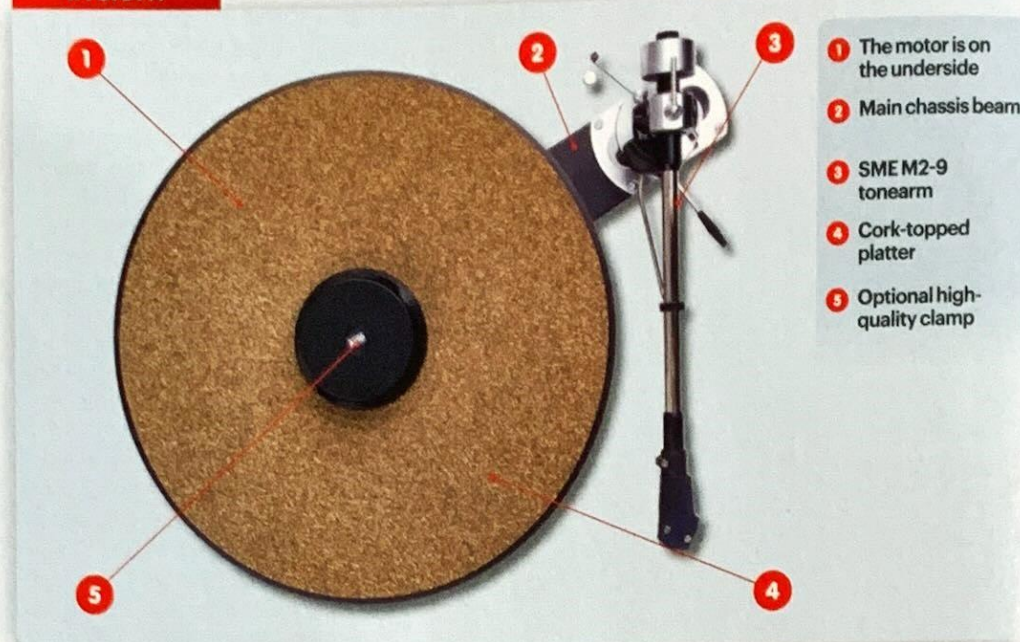
Avid's design process has traditionally been 'top down.' Have you learned anything from the Ingenium that will be of use to other products?

We didn't want to reinvent yet another rectangular wooden turntable, but retain our unique design philosophy. Pushing the possibilities of design verses cost, we quickly learned that we'd reached the limits of the trickled-down design.

The review sample was supplied with a SME M2-9, are there other arms that you have tested with the Ingenium you feel work well?

Through customer feedback we are aware the Ingenium works well with a wide range of arms, hence the requested variants. Being neutral in character, like our other designs, it's very revealing of both arm and cartridge and should be a good platform for anything.

IN SIGHT



- 1 The motor is on the underside
- 2 Main chassis beam
- 3 SME M2-9 tonearm
- 4 Cork-topped platter
- 5 Optional high-quality clamp

top of the rhythms and simply pounds along. After a considerable period experimenting with some of the more curious ends of my record collection, this turntable proves itself to be pretty much unflappable across the entire spectrum of music. The calm neutrality of the Avid is as happy with the pared-back simplicity of Fink as it is hammering through the pounding basslines of The Prodigy.

It takes a little while to realise that the Ingenium does something very unusual at the price. As reviewers we so often talk about the mighty soundstage of a Gyrodec or the legendary timing of the Linn LP12, ascribing character to the turntable itself. The Ingenium is by contrast almost entirely self-effacing. More than anything else, it is a platform for the arm and the cartridge that you choose to partner it with, rather than a part of the performance in itself. It is, in the best possible way a tool to aid your enjoyment of music rather than something that sets out to be the source of enjoyment itself.

This means that the character of the Avid is subtle to the point of reclusive. Having listened to a twin arm version with an SME on one side and Audio Note's fabulous Arm III on the other, the Ingenium reveals a consistently detailed and agile bass response with commendable depth to low notes. By the same token, the 'take no prisoners' approach to poorer recordings seems to be in part down to the SME, but the Ingenium is not a deck that will flatter something that is compressed or hissy. That being said, the noise floor is impressively low and the excellent clamp makes short work of warped records.

The Avid is a subtly different proposition to some of the other turntables on offer at this price point, as the ease with which it accommodates an arm that costs more than the deck demonstrates.

Conclusion

The Ingenium is comparatively light on features and while I am rather fond of its appearance, which results from the triumph of function over form, there are undoubtedly prettier turntables on the market.

What the Ingenium can do, however, is very unusual at this relatively sane end of the market. This is an incredibly neutral, accurate and revealing turntable that allows any arm and cartridge connected to it to lead the performance, while the deck itself gets out of the way.

When you consider that the Ingenium allows for a very wide variety of arms to be attached, you have a turntable that has the potential to make a great many vinyl lovers very happy indeed ●

HOW IT COMPARES

The Avid costs from £800 less an arm depending on the cutout. It tends towards the more minimalist end of the scale in comparison to more highly specified offerings from Pro-Ject, Clearaudio and Rega, but none of these offer the arm-mounting options and the two armed variant of the Ingenium is in a league of its own in terms of choice of arms and ancillaries. The only decks that offer similar flexibility are the Michell Gyrodec and Nottingham Analogue Ace Space – both are more expensive, but more flexible in terms of placement. The Avid can legitimately claim to be the most flexible sub-£1,000 deck on the market, though.

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY



VALUE FOR MONEY



BUILD QUALITY



FEATURES



OVERALL



LIKE: Assured confident and neutral performance; superb build quality

DISLIKE: Won't flatter poor recordings; no cover; limited facilities

WESAY: A hugely capable turntable that should shine with a variety of equipment